KIDS' WORLD NEWS

Visit The Wildside!

Blue Morpho Butterfly

The blue morpho butterfly lives in the Costa Rican rainforests. They can also be found in Mexico, South America and other Central American countries. It is one of the world's largest species of butterfly with a wingspan of up to 8 inches.

This beautiful butterfly only lives for approximately 115 days. Adults spend most of their time on the forest floor and in the lower shrubs and trees of the understory with their wings folded. However, when looking for mates, the blue morpho will fly through all layers of the forest. Humans most commonly see morphos in clearings and along streams where their bright blue wings are most visible. They are active during the daytime.

Their bright blue iridescent color is the result of the many mini scales on the wings (edged with black) that reflect natural light. The underside of the wings is brown with camouflage spots. The spots look like eyes and help to protect these butterflies from predators such as birds and insects when its wings are closed. When the blue morpho flies, the contrasting bright blue and brown colors flash, making it look like the morpho is appearing and disappearing. The males wings are broader and brighter in color. They have, like other butterflies, two clubbed antennas, two fore wings and two hind wings, six legs and three body segments - the head, thorax and abdomen.

Like all butterflies, the morpho has 4 different life cycle stages - egg, pupa, caterpillar and adult. The egg is light green, the caterpillar is a reddish brown color with bright green spots.

During the caterpillar stage, the morpho eats leaves, preferring those from pea plants. When it becomes a butterfly and can no longer chew, the morpho's diet consists of liquids only. A long tube mouth part, known as the probiscus, is used like a straw to suck the juices from rotting fruit and other plants as well as the liquids that come from dead animals. Blue morphos taste fruit with sensors on their legs. These butterflies can taste and smell the air with their antennae which serve as a combined tongue and nose.

The deforestation of the world's tropical forests are a threat to the survival of blue morpho butterflies. Humans provide a direct threat to this beautiful creature because their beauty attracts artists and collectors from all over the globe who wish to capture and display them.